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ASEAN nations join hands to eliminate child, early, forced marriage

A forum on child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM) was held in Jakarta, Indonesia on March 6 by the ASEAN Secretariat in combination with the UN Children's Fund, UN Population Fund, and the Plan International.

Saigon Online (06.03.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2J6Yn3A> - The event was a dialogue of action and orientation among relevant parties including governments, policymakers, youth organisations, civil social organisations, and private sectors in ASEAN countries.

It offered an opportunity for delegates to discuss strategic plans and actions to empower girls and women as well as eliminate CEFM, in line with the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the Millennium Development Goals.

In his opening speech, Deputy General Secretary of ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Kung Phoak stressed that CEFM is not only an issue for some countries in Southeast Asia, but also a major challenge for all ASEAN countries in ensuring the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the ASEAN Community Vision 2025.

These problems stem from gender inequality and discrimination, long-standing customs and traditions, and a lack of education and opportunities for the poor, he said.

This situation has caused a wave of knock-on effects, hindering the progress of society by taking away the childhoods, right to an education, and opportunities for millions of children, especially girls, across Asia.

It also leads to greater risk of violence, abuse, poor health, or premature death, he added.

Solutions to this complex problem require the comprehensive coordination of many relevant parties and a determination to implement political commitments into sustainable and concrete actions.

Participants also pointed out evidence and data on the popularity of CEFM, highlighting challenges in addressing this issue, and calling for efforts and actions to promote gender equality and women empowerment, especially the elimination of CEFM in ASEAN countries.

Who made my clothes? Asian workers' diaries show 'human cost'

The largely female workforce in South Asia is often underpaid, faces verbal and sexual harassment on a daily basis and is forced to work long hours, campaigners say

By Anuradha Nagaraj

Thomson Reuters Foundation (21.02.2018) - <http://tmsnrt.rs/2HN2IJL> - Women making clothes for global fashion brands in South Asia are often yelled at by their supervisors and have to take out loans to make ends meet, hundreds of garment workers' diaries showed.

A year-long study of more than 500 workers in Cambodia, India and Bangladesh found women often work overtime or borrow money from their husbands to feed their families and pay rent.

"I wouldn't have enough money if we ate a lot," read one entry by Chenda in Cambodia, where researchers found most workers were in their 20s and married, with some primary education and earned about \$45 for a 48-hour week.

Fashion industry manufacturers have come under pressure to improve conditions and workers' rights, particularly after the 2013 Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh.

The largely female workforce in South Asia is often underpaid, faces verbal and sexual harassment on a daily basis and is forced to work long hours, campaigners say.

The research, published on Tuesday, was carried out by transparency campaigners Fashion Revolution and The C&A Foundation, affiliated with retailer C&A, which partners with the Thomson Reuters Foundation on trafficking.

The diaries' aim, they said, was to show "the human cost" of fashion and improve workers' lives.

"This gives brands something to consider above and beyond their margins when deciding where to make their clothes," Eric Noggle, research director at Microfinance Opportunities, said in a statement.

"Their decisions have a real and meaningful impact on the lives of these women and their families."

Researchers found that India had the best living and working conditions and Bangladeshi women earned the least per hour, often forcing them to borrow money.

In Cambodia, despite earning the minimum wage and supplementing their income with overtime, researcher found that most workers were still short of money, which meant they had limited access to quality food and medical care.

"What we see are stories of endurance in face of a difficult combination of low wages and economic uncertainty," said Guy Stuart, executive director of Microfinance Opportunities.